

## COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

- I. The AZRSA is a partner on the “Arizona Transition Leadership Team” (ATLT). The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between state agency partners includes the following principles for services to youth with disabilities who are in transition, as follows:

### **PRINCIPLES FOR COOPERATION/COORDINATION**

*Principles that we, representing our respective state agencies, agree to as ways to achieve improved successful outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities:*

- **Transition starts where the youth is:**

*Transition does not start at any one place. No agency or school “owns” the transition process or the youth who is in transition. Transition is a joint responsibility for schools, for children/youth/family services, for the juvenile probation and correction systems, for the behavioral health system, for child protective services, etc. All transition planning must start with recognizing where the youth is at any particular point in time. Any agency involved with a youth must take the responsibility to convene and marshal the resources of all the partner agencies (as appropriate and necessary) that can impact the individual’s successful transition. The word “youth” will be used as much as possible to avoid pigeon-holing the individual as “student”, “delinquent youth”, “offender”, etc. or to identify the individual as a client of a specific agency.*

- **All transition efforts will significantly involve the youth, his/her family, and significant others:**

*Transition efforts must consider the empowerment and ability of youths to take control and responsibility for their own lives as a starting point. This includes, not excludes, families and significant others. The partner agencies agree that, as possible and appropriate, coordinated efforts will always include the active involvement of family, friends, and others who play a significant role in their lives.*

- **Agencies agree to have a flexible approach to writing and implementing program policies:**

*In developing and implementing rules and policies affecting youth in transition, the parties to this statement of intent will consult with and use each other’s expertise to ensure that parents, schools, clients, etc. have the most flexible and useable policies to achieve the vision and mission stated in this statement of intent.*

- **Agencies agree to support local control and management of transition efforts whenever possible:**

*Although a lot of important activities happen at the state level, immediate responsibility and control for obtaining successful outcomes for youths can only happen through the interaction, support and decisions made by persons working directly with youth. Success comes only one person at a time as a result of cooperation and coordination between the local resources which surround that youth.*

- **Agencies agree to require that all transition projects are cross-agency coordinated team efforts:**

*All partner agencies to this statement of intent are committed to supporting, encouraging and requiring that any funding of projects affecting youth shall always involve an element of cross-agency coordination.*

- **Agencies are committed to create cross-agency funding to support and encourage exemplary grassroots transition project:**

*To enable and encourage cross-agency coordination, each of the partner agencies agrees to continuously look for ways to create shared funding programs and projects when developing projects affecting youth transition.*

- **When appropriate and useful, Agencies will develop written protocols for their relationships between one another:**

*Protocols for coordination, as well as clear statements of policies relating to transition, will be included as appendices to this document as agencies and program entities sign this statement of intent. Each agency is committed to evaluating their internal policies and approaches in light of this statement of intent. It is agreed that all agency policies and protocols will address cross-agency involvement and coordination.*

- **Relationships will be based on mutual respect and support of each other's mandates:**

*Relationships between agencies (and agency staff) will be developed and maintained within an environment of mutual trust, the open and free sharing of knowledge and ideas, creatively looking for win-win solutions and placing a high value on new knowledge and new learning.*

*It is our belief that adherence to these principles will provide a framework for accomplishing our common vision and mission.*

- II. The AZRSA also works within the context of a separate interagency agreement with the Arizona Department of Education (ADE)/Exceptional Student Services (ESS) and the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), which outlines the cooperative relationships between the AZRSA, the ADE and the DDD to assist youth in their transition to adult life.

#### **A. VISION AND PURPOSES**

The vision for the interagency agreement is “a system of coordinated planning and collaboration by public education agencies (PEA), local Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), and the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) offices leading to a smooth and successful transition of students with disabilities to meaningful, gainful, and sustained employment.” This vision is achieved through mutual cooperation and an understanding by all parties of each party’s role in achieving this vision.

Specifically, the interagency agreement:

1. Provides guidance to VR and Division of Developmental Disabilities line staff, and school personnel when serving students transitioning from school to work or other post-school activities.

2. Provides information to parents/students so that they know what they can and should expect from the PEA, from VR and from the Division of Developmental Disabilities during the transition process.
3. Provides parameters to schools, the RSA and the Division of Developmental Disabilities administrators/managers when developing, negotiating, and implementing cooperative agreements.

#### **B. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CONSULTATION**

PEAs, local RSA and Division of Developmental Disabilities staff agree on how they will consult and provide technical assistance to each other and to the students and their family/guardian/surrogates in planning for the transition from school to post-school activities. They also discuss and agree under what circumstances and to what extent the VR counselor will be available to provide consultation for student(s) when a formal referral to the VR program is not involved.

#### **C. OUTREACH AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS**

Beginning at age 16 (or younger, if determined appropriate by the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team), a statement of needed transition services for the student (including, if appropriate, a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages) becomes part of the student's IEP.

Local RSA staff and staff of the public educational agency together agree on the methods for reaching out to students with disabilities who may need and could benefit from VR services.

Brochures, flyers, or informational letters are made available to students and their parents to explain the Vocational Rehabilitation program's mission, the role the VR program plays in the transition process and IEP development, the VR referral policies and procedures, and information about the existence of any special joint programs available through the school as part of the IEP process.

#### **D. REFERRALS OF INDIVIDUALS FOR SERVICES**

Students with physical or mental impairments that result in substantial impediments to employment and who require VR services to prepare for or enter employment which is integrated and competitive, should be referred to the VR program.

The involvement of both the VR and the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) is normally requested for students who are eligible for services from the DDD and who are planning to participate in work upon school exit.

Students who want or need to engage in work activities, but are not able or willing to prepare for integrated work which is, or leads to, competitive employment (even with the availability of extended supported employment services) should be referred directly to the DDD program.

##### **1. Timing of referrals**

Students are given an opportunity for referral to a VR counselor or the DDD support coordinator early enough to allow for the development of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and a seamless transition to work or to post school activities (or

in enough time to allow students timely access to VR-sponsored programs or services under school agreements).

The appropriate time to make a referral to the Vocational Rehabilitation program is when the IEP Team, including the VR counselor, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities support coordinator begin to identify transition services needed to identify a specific vocational goal and services needed to achieve a vocational outcome. Students should not be referred or asked to apply for services before they are ready to begin this transition process. Referrals are usually made some time within the last year of school - unless the IEP team, including the VR counselor and/or DDD support coordinator, determines it appropriate to make a referral earlier.

## **2. Process for making referrals**

It is preferred that referrals be made using the IEP process. However, the VR or DDD program accepts referrals initiated directly by school staff, students themselves, family members, or other agencies working with the students as well.

### **a. Referrals to the VR program**

Pertinent school information accompanies a referral to the VR counselor. Schools and the DDD staff are also expected to provide information for students who are referred to the VR by other means.

School staff provide the following educational records to the VR counselor:

- Records which provide documentation of a disability.
- The student's current IEP and any significant supplemental information.
- School performance information that will have a direct bearing on the development of a VR Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

Division of Developmental Disabilities staff provide the following documentation to the VR counselor:

- The student's current Individual Support Plan (ISP) and any significant supplemental information.
- The Referral Form (DDD1328AFORNA).
- Other available information that will have a direct bearing on the development of the VR Individualized Plan for Employment.

VR counselors accept the school's and the Division of Developmental Disabilities' documentation that a disability exists. Additional assessments may be necessary, however, to determine an individual's need for VR services and to develop an IPE for the individual. Assessments are not done by RSA to assist the PEA to determine an individual's needs/status within the school system in order to determine eligibility for IDEA.

### **b. Referrals to DDD**

Pertinent school information accompanies a referral to the DDD support coordinator. Schools and VR program staff are also expected to provide information for students who are referred to the DDD by other means.

School staff provide the following educational records to the DDD support coordinator:

- Records which provide documentation of a disability.
- The student's current IEP and any significant supplemental information.
- School performance information that will have a direct bearing on the development of an ISP.

VR staff provide the following documentation to the DDD support coordinator.

- The student's current Individualized Plan for Employment and any significant supplemental information.
- Other available information that will have a direct bearing on the development of the VR Individualized Plan for Employment.

Additional trial work experiences or work activities may be necessary to determine an individual's appropriateness for DDD services and to develop an ISP for the individual.

c. Referrals to, and involvement of, VR partner programs/agencies

The RSA has developed partnerships with the Regional Behavioral Health Authorities (RBHA), the Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections (ADJC), and county juvenile probation programs. These agencies are important resources for a student's transition and must be included in transition planning and IEP/IPE development.

A referral to the VR program may also involve a referral to (and involve) another partner agency. These other agencies become involved in IEP/IPE planning under the following two circumstances:

- A number of agencies help to fund VR services by matching the federal VR grant. In order to use the resulting resources, students must be joint clients and eligible under the rules for both programs.
- For individuals with very severe disabilities, maintaining successful employment often depends on the availability of an ongoing support system. Agencies which provide such ongoing supports (i.e. day treatment and training services, residential services, ongoing mental health and medication management services, probation or parole services) must be involved in planning VR services.

## **E. JOINT PLANNING**

### **1. Youth Transition "Plans"**

Students eligible for special education under the IDEA, public educational agencies use the IEP planning process to prepare students for transition from school to work

or post-school activities. The written Individualized Education Plan documents the results of such planning.

The VR program uses the IPE planning process to determine the student's employment goal, intermediate objectives for reaching that goal, and IPE services to be provided.

The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) uses the Individual Support Plan (ISP) to: document the needed services identified by an interdisciplinary team; direct the provision of safe, secure and dependable active treatment areas that are necessary for individuals to achieve full social inclusion, independence, and personal and economic well-being; and document the extended employment services and supports needed by the person upon exit from a Vocational Rehabilitation program.

## **2. Processes**

The processes are separate and each process has its own rules. It is important that there is coordination and collaboration at the points the three processes intersect.

- Schools do not presume VR or Division of Developmental Disabilities involvement in either planning IEPs or in providing services without the active involvement, knowledge, and consent of assigned VR and Division of Developmental Disabilities' staff.
- In order to plan and develop an IPE or ISP, VR counselors and DDD support coordinators need access to information available from the school such as: evaluations (psycho-educational, medical, vocational, mobility); Individualized Education Plan (IEP); Individualized Vocational Education Plan (IVEP), Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) reports; school transcripts; and other school records, as appropriate.
- In addition, the VR counselor needs access to information available from the Division of Developmental Disabilities support coordinator such as the Individual Support Plan, accompanying evaluations and progress reports and other documents as appropriate.
- Copies of the IEP, IPE and Individual Support Plan are shared. Plans are consistent with each other to the extent possible. Staff should include appropriate elements from each other's plans in their own plan. This encourages coordination and collaboration.

## **3. Plan development, completion, changes, problem resolution**

For the VR counselor, a copy of the IEP and Individual Support Plan is required for VR case record documentation.

### **a. Division of Developmental Disabilities and VR staff participation in IEP meetings**

With timely notice from the PEA and with parental permission of the responsible party, VR and the Division of Developmental Disabilities staff participate in an IEP meeting if VR and Division of Developmental Disabilities' involvement has been determined to be necessary and appropriate. If a VR and/or Division of

Developmental Disabilities staff person is not able to attend, VR and/or Division of Developmental Disabilities staff make contact and provide appropriate input before the meeting if at all possible.

Public educational agency staff is responsible to develop alternative ways (including written correspondence and conference calls) to enable the VR and the Division of Developmental Disabilities staff to participate in an IEP meeting when participation is necessary.

b. Timeframe for completion of an IPE or ISP

The IPE or ISP is completed early enough to allow a seamless transition to work or to post-school activities (or to allow the student timely access to VR-sponsored programs or services under school agreements).

c. IEP/IPE/ISP problem resolution

Staff from the PEA, VR and the Division of Developmental Disabilities and other participating agencies attempt to resolve disputes among each other. The interagency agreement is used as a tool for resolving conflicts.

If not resolved at the counselor, PEA or Division of Developmental Disabilities support coordinator level, issues are elevated to the school principal, the VR office supervisor and/or the support coordinator supervisor.

#### **F. SCOPE OF INDIVIDUALIZED SERVICES**

The scope of VR/DDD services that are available to an individual student during the transition process, as needed, are:

- Information and referral services;
- Assessments needed for IPE/ISP planning; and
- Vocational counseling and guidance.

All other VR services, including vocational counseling and guidance, are provided under an IPE (referred to as “IPE services” elsewhere in the agreement).

IPE/ISP services are available to eligible students upon their exit from school, or earlier if necessary for a successful and seamless transition.

Extended employment services through the Division of Developmental Disabilities are available upon exit from the VR program or when a referral to the Vocational Rehabilitation program is not appropriate. Employment service supports for non-long term care eligible adults are dependent upon available state funding.

#### **G. RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT**

The interagency agreement provides the general parameters of the relationship between a public educational agency, the local RSA office and local Division of Developmental Disabilities support coordinator. Both school, VR and division staff are encouraged to discuss and develop their unique relationships within this overall context.

#### 4.8(b)(2) Coordination with Education Officials

Mutual cooperation and collaboration enhances relationships, improves services to mutual students/clients, and expedites the transition of students with disabilities to meaningful and gainful employment.

Local school, VR and DDD staff discuss and agree on:

- Who the VR, DDD and school contacts are for all students with disabilities.
- The VR counselor's planned visitation schedule.
- How VR and DDD contact(s) will be informed of planned IEP meetings and circumstances under which separate VR and DDD input is sufficient or when actual attendance is expected.
- Planning for specific joint outreach activities within the school.

It is often useful to communicate such local arrangements in writing and to make this information widely available.

III. Within the context of the Waiver of Statewideness, the AZRSA makes a clear distinction between:

- A. The general responsibilities each agency has under IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act for transition; and
- B. The special programs with schools (authorized under the Waiver of Statewideness), which involve the use of third party match funding agreements, as follows:
  - Agreements which allow the AZRSA to hire additional staff and initiate and provide services to students while they are still in school under a completed IPE; and
  - Agreements which allow the AZRSA to hire additional staff and to develop and fund specific work transition projects for VR clients while they are still in school. These contracts typically involve funding school staff to plan and provide specialized services not available to the general student population and funding work projects (supplies, equipment, transportation, etc.).

IV. Special issues/challenges AZRSA continues to deal with include:

- A. Meeting the basic transition requirements for outreach, coordination, and Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) preparation for students in all Arizona schools who want and need VR services before graduation;
- B. Greater access and outreach to youth in all high schools who are disabled, but not in special education programming;
- C. Meeting the special needs (especially assistive technology needs) of persons who are deaf and persons who are blind;
- D. Expanding the availability of Youth Transition Programs with other entities using a competitive contract process; and
- E. Improving the AZRSA's monitoring of third party funded programs within high schools.



V. Agreements with Public Education Agencies (PEA)

The AZRSA district management staff also creates formal and informal cooperative relationships with Arizona schools.

VI. Agreements with Arizona Universities and some Community Colleges

AZRSA continues to have intergovernmental agreements with Arizona Institutions of Higher Education (IHE), such as all major state universities and some community colleges.

These include, but are not limited to:

- Agreements regarding services for note taking, Braille, and sign language interpreting with the three universities.
- Contracts with Mesa Community College and Central Arizona College for qualified interpreting services, note taking, scribes, lab assistants and taped text reader services, alternative print formats, developing capacity to expand educational programs for persons with sensory impairments, and coordination of service delivery between AZRSA and other community resources.